

Newspaper: The Call

Date: June 28, 2007

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Why the police department is experiencing tension

Woonsocket

In our weekly audience with Mayor Menard on WNRI (and yes I use this column to shamelessly plug my radio station) the chief executive minced no words in assessing her reasons why the police department is experiencing tension. She places the blame squarely on the police union whom she claims has been trying to wrestle control of the department for the last 12 years. Only when the union leadership "calls the shots" will they be satisfied says the Mayor. The Mayor went on to say "they want to be the management."

On the subject of police department review, it looks like there will be two studies: one — a management study funded by the city council and another — an accreditation program preferred by the Mayor and funded with drug forfeiture money. The management study spearheaded by Council President Leo Fontaine is a short-term study focused on a review of current conditions with a list of recommendations for better operation. The accreditation process is a long-range process with the idea of setting local standards against a national set of standards. Council President Leo Fontaine has complained the accreditation program would force the city to spend more money on police equipment while not solving the root causes. Just for the record, the word accreditation means gaining approval to an institution after the institution has met specific requirements.

On the subject of the General Assembly, the Mayor is livid that schools were leveled funded while the senators and representatives bailed out to the tune of 16 million dollars as "miscalculation" in construction overruns at the Dunkin Donuts Center. "Where are the priorities of these people in Providence where they can't educate our children while spending money on a courthouse in Lincoln that town leaders don't want." The Mayor said let Dunkin Donuts pay the extra costs, "they've got the money."

On the subject of the upcoming mayoral race, I was at the bar of Kay's Restaurant the other night when local politics came up. The unidentified analysts



Roger Bouchard

Woonsocket

Former Mayoral candidate, state representative and retired police officer Todd Brien wrote in a (Web site response) that he was happy the city council turned back a raise for the mayor when it met last week. Brien argued in his letter that based on the time she spends at city hall and city events, she should be paid half the salary she now gets. But Brien raised a few eyebrows when he ended his letter by saying "the mayor sent the wrong message by being a pig and putting herself in for a raise." Brien, who has been on the sidelines with an occasional letter to the editor and talk show call; is mulling over a second attempt to gain entrance to the fourth floor city hall office. The August deadline for challengers is getting closer.

Lincoln

Those video slot fanatics hoping to gamble the night away got a set-back last week. The General Assembly nixed the chance this year for round-the-clock operations. A bill to let Newport Grand and Twin River in Lincoln conduct 24-hour gaming died due to a lack of time to debate the pros and cons. The issue is likely to resurface in January when the legislature returns.

Newport

President Bush will be in Rhode Island this morning to speak at the Naval War College about the war on terror during an international gathering of some of the world's top-ranking military officials. The War College is celebrating the 50th anniversary of its Naval Command College, a program for international offi-

cers. President Bush has visited every state except Rhode Island and Vermont. Within a mile the President, the Tall Ships 2007 and a meeting of Republican state governors will all be coinciding events. After the speech, Mr. Bush will head north for a vacation at his father's seaside estate in Kennebunkport, Maine.

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Providence

Recognizing state government administrators should have recognized the problem, it is still frustrating to witness the state Supreme Court reinstating an arbitration award that calls for the state to pay deputy sheriffs for overtime that they didn't work. The court agrees that the deputy sheriffs should have been offered overtime work when the state sheriffs and marshals merged in 2001. Somebody in the governor's office decided to throw the overtime to the former marshals even though deputy sheriffs had received training to qualify for the work an arbitrator ruled that all qualified members of the merged division should have had a chance at the overtime and the Supreme Court agreed. Hence overtime pay for people who should have been the offered the work and didn't get it. Cost to the state? Depending on who you talk to: \$100,000 or less.

Hollywood/Providence

Who was looking for more publicity Paris Hilton or Attorney General Patrick Lynch? Why did Lynch mysteriously surface for 24 hours to put fear out that the tobacco settlement money might not be available to plug the hole in the state budget. The Attorney General was able to grab another headline the next day saying after close study everything is all right after all. Lynch closed the 24 hour marathon by concluding "I was satisfied our interests were protected." End of fiscal emergency. I enjoyed the Paris Hilton video a lot more than Patrick's TV sound bite.

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